

Internationalization plan for a Finnish design start-up

Case: Studio Maiju Uski

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<p>The objective of the study is to suggest an internationalization plan for a Finnish design start-up company Studio Maiju Uski. The study's intention is also to find out what kind of marketing and communication channels Finnish design start-ups can use and why. We examine how critical the designer's own role is in the internalization plan, including marketing and communication plan. Finnish design industry is also introduced and analysed.</p> <p>The methods used in this study are qualitative and cross-sectional. We have interviewed subject matter experts within Finnish design and conducted as a case study of the Finnish design start-up mentioned in the previous paragraph.</p> <p>In order to analyse the results from the qualitative data, we have applied several models within internationalization, networks, marketing and communications. The chosen models are well established within these fields.</p> <p>The outcomes of the study indicate that the role of the designer in the internationalization process is imperative. Investing time and effort in creating a robust network with manufacturers, competitors, media and other sometimes unexpected stakeholders. Such "unexpected" stakeholders can include gallerists, art enthusiasts, and patrons of culture and design. A holistic understanding of the industry and its challenges is crucial for design start-up to succeed internationally.</p>	
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Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Objective and needs.....	1
1.2	Case company	2
1.3	Research problem and questions.....	3
1.4	Theoretical framework and content of the study	3
1.5	Structure of the study	4
2	Finnish design	5
2.1	Background	5
2.2	Current status.....	6
2.3	Challenges and opportunities.....	8
3	Internationalization plan.....	11
3.1	A Global Marketing Plan.....	11
3.2	The Nine Strategic Windows model	12
3.3	Born Global	13
3.4	Design-intensive born globals	15
3.5	Network model	16
3.6	SWOT.....	18
3.7	Competitive analysis	19
3.8	Competitor analysis.....	21
3.9	Communications plan.....	22
3.9.1	Integrated marketing communications	23
3.9.2	Social media marketing.....	25
3.9.3	Word of mouth.....	26
4	Methodology and methods	28
4.1	Methods of research.....	28
4.1.1	The research approach	28
4.1.2	Case study	29
4.2	Data collection methods	29
4.3	Validity and reliability of the study	30
5	Analysis	32
5.1	Analysis from the interviews	32
5.2	Analysis of the findings.....	38
5.2.1	Internationalization plan	39
5.2.2	Networks	40
5.2.3	SWOT analysis.....	40
5.2.4	Competitor analysis.....	42

5.2.5 Marketing and communications plan.....	44
5.2.6 Funding	45
6 Conclusions	46
6.1 Suggestions & recommendations.....	46
6.2 Recommendations for further research.....	47
6.3 Own learning	47
References.....	49
Appendices.....	1
Appendix 1. Interview questions.....	1

1 Introduction

The objective of the study is to suggest an internationalization plan for the Finnish design start-up company Studio Maiju Uski. The study's intention is to find out what kind of marketing and communication channel strategies Finnish design start-ups can use and why. The aim is also to examine how critical the designer's own role is in the entire internationalization plan, including marketing and communication plans.

1.1 Objective and needs

Finnish design has expanded from the traditional product design to industrial design services and other intangible service design (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö. 2013, 9.)

The field of design is wide; industrial designers, interior architects, furniture designers, graphic designers, clothing designers, textile artists, potters, jewellers and artisans. (Taiteen edistämiskeskus 2019). In this study the focus is in the traditional design i.e. in furniture and product design.

In recent years there has been a lot of pressure for the Finnish economy and society to change. Traditional value chains are falling apart due to economic globalization, forcing industries to change structurally. Without investments in productivity enhancing innovations the means for the manufacturing industry to survive in Finland are weak. At the same time, the finances have been under pressure, making it impossible to maintain the current public service levels. (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2013, 6.)

The interest in the Finnish design industry from public and private investors is increasing, however the funding is missing at the moment. The design industry can be seen as a promising and intriguing investment in the sense that investors see potential of growth of Finnish design in global markets. How can we increase the awareness of the Finnish design industry and the design start-ups among investors, both locally and internationally? There are many steps that need to be taken to increase the Finnish design knowledge in foreign markets. One major role in this is in the Finnish design companies that need to develop networks and cooperation with agents and companies in the industry.

All of the above requires financial capital and funding, hence the next question is how to convince investors to invest in a Finnish design start-up. The designers own role shouldn't be underestimated at this point, even though it is justified to study the need of external parties and cooperation with other partners.

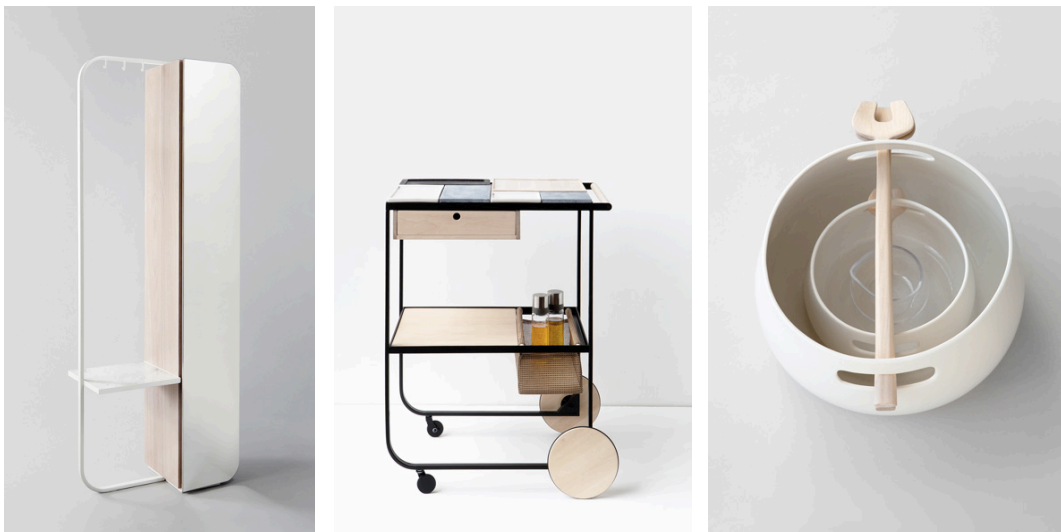
1.2 Case company

Studio Maiju Uski was founded by the designer Maiju Uski in 2015 in Helsinki, Finland. The company's objective is to provide individual and high-quality design services; furniture and product design as well as spatial and interior design. Furniture and product brands that represent similar minimalistic and modern aesthetics as Studio Maiju Uski are the target customers for the company's design services. Design oriented restaurants, hotels and other public spaces are also in the company's target segment, both for the design services and existing products.

The founder Maiju Uski holds a master's degree in furniture design from Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture in Helsinki. She works widely in the range of furniture, product and spatial design. Simplicity steers her work, regardless of whether the scale is architectural planning or products for use on the table. She strives for discovering intersections of various design practices and developing their dialogue.

Uski's design process evolves around utilizing and merging different materials in everyday products and furnishings in order to create beautiful, usable and sustainable designs. Her goal is to find the best way of using and combining different materials. Products designed by Maiju Uski vary from furniture to tableware and lighting.

"It's exciting to find points of contact in these areas and discover how one area of design influences another. I'm inspired by different materials, their qualities and their feel. My goal is to find the best way of using and combining different tactile materials in everyday products and furnishings. Using this as a starting point, I strive to create beautiful, usable and sustainable designs," says Uski.



Picture 1. Säde, Palat and Kolmikko designed by Studio Maiju Uski

Currently, Studio Maiju Uski promotes its products and services and reaches out to manufacturers and buyers mainly at industry trade fairs and exhibitions as well as through websites, social media and other professional networks and platforms. The industry fair participation enables the founder to create direct contacts with buyers and manufacturers as well as to seek visibility in the media.

1.3 Research problem and questions

A marketing and communication plan is an integral part of the internationalization process. For a design start-up, there is no existence without communication and visibility. An internationalization plan involves for example marketing and networking plans. An important part of a communications plan is the international fair structure. Participating in fairs and creating networks and contacts will allow for the designer to get direct responses to the market needs and possibilities. The design start-up needs to be visible and reachable through social media and various media platforms as well as featured in right contexts, both in media and at events.

The main research problem/question of the study is:

- What kind of internationalization plan does a design start-up need?

The sub-questions are:

- How to create an internationalization plan for a design start-up?
- What existing international structures / networks can be utilized in the plan?
- How can a designer benefit from the plan?
- What is the designer's own role in the creation of the internationalization, marketing and communication plans?
- Can value be added by collaborating / connecting / working together with external partners?
- How to fund the use of external partners?

1.4 Theoretical framework and content of the study

The theoretical framework in this thesis is based on internationalization theories and marketing and communication strategies. The study focuses on exploring what kind of marketing and communication strategies are available for Finnish design start-ups. The aim is also to examine how critical the designer's own role is in the entire internalization

plan and in the creation of the marketing and communications plan, and to consider if outsourcing of the marketing and communications strategy would be beneficial.

As the research question is focused on the needs of a design start-up, the theories used in the study will focus on internationalization and developing a global marketing plan including communications plan from an SME's (small and medium-sized enterprises) perspective.

The study considers many factors, which a design start-up needs in its internationalization process, hence the theories selected are aiming to support this. The focus will be on internationalization theories, such as the Nine Strategic Windows, and Born global models, especially focusing on design-intensive Born globals. As the study is also aiming to find out the designer's own role in the process, a SWOT analysis will be analyzed and implemented. An analysis of close competitors is conducted.

The communications strategy as a part of the marketing plan will be studied; integrated marketing communications, social media marketing as well as word of mouth theories are briefly explained.

In order to limit the scope of the study, entry market theories are not analyzed as the case company's business model is aiming to find a manufacturer and to broaden the B2B network rather than focusing on own production and sales in the domestic market.

1.5 Structure of the study

The thesis has the following structure: an introduction, where the idea of the study, and the needs and the objectives are presented, followed by an introduction to the case company. In the same chapter the research problem and questions and theoretical framework, and content and structure of the study are presented.

The second part focuses on Finnish design in general and its current global positioning as well as challenges and opportunities. Relevant theories are presented in chapter three.

In the fourth chapter of the study the methodology, as well as methods, and validity and reliability of the study, are explained.

Chapter five focuses on the findings from the interviews and analysis of the findings. Conclusions followed by suggestions for the future are discussed in chapter six.

2 Finnish design

Architect Ruairí O'Brien writes in his OECD Observer article "Finnish architecture and design: A natural fit":

"What is the secret of this small nation's success? People, their customs and their local habits are often expressions of an existential struggle with the natural settings they are born in. In Finland the extreme cold and darkness of winter, the long days of light in summer, the deep cool lakes, the secretive beauty of the forests, are dramatic character and soul forming elements. Can the Finnish success in the design world be linked to the workings of such poetic forces? Or is it linked to the instinctive strength of character (what Finns call *sisu*) born out of Finland's vast lonely expanses and living at a healthy distance from busy European metropolises?" (O'Brien 2019.)

Designers, artists and architects consider Finland as a country and a culture where high-quality design and architecture comes from. Finland is in a global lead in educational rankings and happiness polls. It is also known for its world-class high-tech products, game software industry and sport athletics. O'Brien asks if Finland is "A land of extremes with a wide breadth of emotions, talents and expectations?" (O'Brien 2019.)

2.1 Background

The golden age of Finnish design was in the 1950s and 1960s when designers such as Tapio Wirkkala, Timo Sarpaneva, Kaj Franck and Alvar Aalto were widely known domestically and globally. According to many, Finnish design still dates back to the same decades. (Pakarinen 2016.)

There are Finnish design companies' success stories from the 1960s and 1970s originally, such as Iittala, Marimekko and Fiskars. History still relies on these stories heavily. It can be argued that these success stories have not been able to turn into a genuine competitive advantage, despite of the much valued history of Nordic design. Finland is lacking these kind of current global success stories and the attempts lately have not been that successful. Even the biggest Finnish design companies are relatively small on a global scale. (Enqvist, Joenniemi, Lassila, Mäkelä, Pietarinen & Tuiskula 2019, 2.)

The first companies in the arts and crafts sector in Finland, such as Finlayson, Arabia, Iittala and Nuutajärvi, were international by nature; they were founded by foreigners, they employed a large number of foreign professionals in the art industry, and they were

exporting products at a very early stage. These companies were mainly focusing on export, as there were not enough potential buyers for high-quality arts and crafts products in the domestic market. (Oksanen-Särelä 2012, 21.)

The need for internationalisation of the Finnish design industry has been expressed and considered from the perspective of national competitiveness since the 1990s. According to Oksanen-Särelä (2012, 153.) "Internationalisation would require larger design firms or more networking among actors in the field of design, enhanced international visibility for Finnish design expertise, and improved business acumen among design entrepreneurs."

2.2 Current status

Finnish design has a strong tradition and it is valued internationally. Finland also has a reputation for design excellence. (Taiteen edistämiskeskus 2019; GoodnewsfromFinland 2019.)

Process knowledge, diverse collaboration teams and solution-oriented design skills, are seen as the strengths of Finnish design. It is also known for its ability to combine function, beauty and practicality in a balanced way. Finnish design has a strong identity internationally, based on a functional, open-minded, pragmatic, and distinguishable material and form language. Also, internationally, Finland's approach to demand and user-friendly innovation policy is appreciated. (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2013, 78.)

To be successful it is not enough just to have quality products in the international market, it also requires confidence and thorough study of the international market. "The right attitude and confidence in what you do is crucial to success in the world," says Mikel Rosen, fashion and design expert. (Markkinointi & Mainonta 2017.)

The Finnish designers need to be bold and differentiate from the competitors by doing their own thing and not copying others. The new ideas, commercial products and a good brand are the foundation of the international success. The value of creating something new and bold should be seen in wider context and understand that it can generate commercial opportunities. (Wevolve 2012, 13-14.)

In 2012 Saku Koskinen, the leader of the Design Goes Global program at Finpro stated that the timing for the internationalization of Finnish design companies could not be better and the buzz around Scandinavian design is strong. The hype was strengthened by Helsinki being the World Design Capital in 2012. Koskinen mentioned that e-commerce

opens up additional new opportunities for companies in the design industry. In addition, private and public investors realized the opportunities in Finnish design companies. (Yrittäjäsanomat 2012.)

There is some criticism towards state and government regarding education and export. Design critic Kaj Kalin argues that Finnish designers know how to design and produce objects if they just get a chance to them “through”. He asks for the state to take a larger role in the process and asks why designers are educated if there is no support from the state to support them in their internationalization attempts. (Pakarinen 2016.)

Timo Salli, Professor of Art and Design at Aalto University gives an example of the current situation in the Nordics: “Norway is going hard. It spends money on the visibility of its own country. In Finland, we do not have a ministry that would be responsible for exporting the Finnish design. However, Finland has a design promotion organization, Design Forum Finland, which is funded by the The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment but it is focusing on training of design managers. It does not market or promote Finnish design globally, Salli claims. (Pakarinen 2016.)

Salli argues that Finland is lacking an agency that would focus on bringing forward new Aaltos or Sarpanevas to the international market. And he claims that this is a reason, among other things, domestic names don’t show up in design magazines. In Finland, the export of design is only in the hands of private companies, whereas other countries operate in a different manner, Salli continues. (Pakarinen 2016.)

Petteri Kolinen, CEO of Design Forum Finland describes their work as being a support for companies and their export endeavours. The journey for an individual designer to travel to New York to showcase their prototype to generate business is usually very long. Kolinen says that distributors can be found, but if the designer has a lack of knowledge in production or logistics, the journey can be very long. A basic characteristic of Finnish people is modesty and Finns often sit and wait for someone to promote them. “It is not good for the designer.” – says Kolinen. The Swedes are very active in promoting their product announcements, as are the Germans. “When I was Martela’s design director and attended the Milan trade fair, multinational designers contacted and booked meetings. I had a calendar full - but rarely Finns booked any meetings. We are artistic, and we are really good at it, but transferring artistry into commercial success is a challenge for us” Kolinen summarises and demands designers to be more active. (Pakarinen, P. 2016.)

According to Wevolve’s study (2012, 22) a successful internationalization of a design is always a sum of many things that have been implemented with an expertise and a vision.

The importance of events that enhance internationalization attempts can't be underestimated. The internationalization projects have four steps: a prerequisite for operations, a development of vision, focus and events, and utilizing the possibilities as well as commercialization and a follow up.

International exhibitions and competition activities have been an essential part of promoting the Finnish design. The positive publicity it brings have also raised the profile of Finnish design domestically and encouraged domestic companies to hire top Finnish designers, which has raised the level of the industry. (Oksanen-Särelä 2012, 23.)

According to Enqvist et al. (2019, 9), there are multiple obstacles for Finnish design companies in their attempts to seek international success. First of all there are not that many channels to support the efforts and in addition, examples of other recent success stories are missing. However, the biggest obstacle in Finland is considered to be the lack of imperative international networks and funding of smart capital that would support the internationalization attempts by promoting and selling the services or products outside of Finland.

2.3 Challenges and opportunities

Design companies operate in a dynamic and demanding international environment. Often the design companies are small and there are no strong industry structures. The ability to adapt rapidly to changes and going flexibly are created through network operating models. The most important requirement for the creation and growth of new design businesses is an environment that is supportive to entrepreneurship. Public sector and legislation needs to support dynamic entrepreneurship, in which many companies are created but also allowed to fail. Entrepreneurship and part-time entrepreneurship are a crucial part of the service network in the creative economy. (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkaisuja 2012, 14.)

In 2012, Finpro conducted a study that was a part of the Design Goes Global program funded by Uusimaa ELY Center. The idea of the program was to enable nine companies to participate in tailor-made training on internationalization and to answer company-specific internationalization needs. The study discovered challenges in the success of Finnish design companies internationalization processes: too broad concepts and limited resources. In addition, in the study, the design companies mentioned their own limited resources, too low target level, lack of funding and the unwillingness of companies to work together in the internationalization process. (Yrittäjäsäsanomat 2012.)

According to Sissi Silván, Head of Finpro's Design Goes Global program, for Finnish design companies the biggest challenge is to sharpen their concept. She argues that in many cases, the aim to internationalize is too broad and companies are offering everything to everyone. The companies need help to focus their concept to the main core, which enables growth and attracts investors. (Yrittäjäsanoimat 2012.)

Having a small business can be beneficial as small companies are able to respond to new demands more flexibly and faster than large companies. They can also network easier with other designers and small firms if needed. Designers often want to keep the size of their company small. However, when the company aims to internationalize, the lack of resources can be problematic. When pursuing internationalization, the resources of the small companies are inadequate in terms of the knowledge and competence as well as the capital needed to operate and how to raise it. (Oksanen-Särelä 2012, 19.)

Enqvist et al. (2019, 6-7) argues that in many examples of Finnish lifestyle companies business growth efforts, the companies face challenges such as the companies being too entrepreneur / designer led. Even though the basic knowledge of starting a business exists, the companies are lacking versatile knowledge and backgrounds and are operating based only on the designer's vision. The lack of knowledge in financial issues can affect fund raising negatively, especially from the private sector.

Enqvist et al. (2019, 8) claims that companies culture and mission are important when aiming for international markets and also that they should be Born globals from their establishment. It is also easier to operate and attract talent internationally. Customers value the culture, values and purpose of companies'. Nowadays customers are very knowledgeable about social and environmental aspects of products and they want to buy the whole story. Hence instead of just selling products to customers it is also crucial to have a purpose to follow.

The situation is not completely hopeless, as observed by Marimekko's Chair Mika Ihamuotila: "Our society is grounded in the Nordic ideas of well-being and equality, the ones that in today's world of hardened values seem to be in increasing demand." (Enqvist et al. 2019, 8).

Ornamo (2020) conducted a business survey in autumn 2019 that stated that the design industry in Finland was estimated to continue operating in a bull market and the profitability of the companies to continue to grow in 2019-2020. Based on Ornamo's annual market outlooks, the design industry is sensitive to economic fluctuations. According to a survey that Ornamo conducted in April-May 2020, the corona crisis has

already affected most of the small businesses in the consumer market in the design industry. However, the crisis can also have an impact on consumer's consumption habits and potentially consumers will value more sustainable choices in the future.

3 Internationalization plan

According to Hollensen (2011, 6) internationalization can be defined as when a company is operating in several countries internationally yet the operations are focused on a certain region. Internationalization has many benefits for the company and business but a diligent preparation is needed to succeed.

When the company has moved its operations and other activities from the home market to international markets, internationalization takes place. For SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) internationalization can be a relatively differing process compared to larger companies where internationalization can be more of an on-going process. (Hollensen 2011, 50.)

Hollensen (2011, 84-85) describes that there are many advantages when SMEs aim to go international; production innovations, use of new technology and likely more profitable markets. The internationalization also allows for access to new product ideas and it expands the company's competitiveness.

3.1 A Global Marketing Plan

Wood (2013, 2-3) defines that a purpose of the marketing planning process is to create an action and decision plan for a company. These actions and decisions are based on a broad analysis of for example the company's market environment, an analysis of customers and objectives, strategies and implementation. The actual plan guides the company in its attempts to achieve business goals. The marketing plan is extremely important in a changing environment as it provides a framework for the marketing activities in general and keeps you focused. It is important to understand that it is the plan is living and flexible, and can be adjusted to sometimes unexpected changes in markets, technology, legislation and competition.

Hollensen (2011, 6) describes the purpose of a global marketing plan to be "to create sustainable competitive advantages in the global marketplace". The size of the company generally defines the planning process and its nature; in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) the process is likely to be more informal than in large scale enterprises (LSEs) where the process tends to be more systemized due to the company size and structure.

The marketing planning process represents the company's intentions; where it wants to go and what the plan is to get there. Even though the process of planning an international marketing plan does not differ hugely from planning for a domestic plan, there is likely to be more need for effort in the international plan as the markets differ, communication channels and lead times are longer and there is also a room for misinterpretations. In order for the international plan to be effective, it needs to be structured. (Gilligan & Hird 2013, 125, 129.)

3.2 The Nine Strategic Windows model

Solberg describes his model "The Nine Strategic Windows" as an analysis of a SWOT model for internationalization. The model is a 3x3 matrix that shows internal and external factors individually and what kind of impact interaction has on a firm's international marketing strategy. Each box in the matrix refers to a firm's strategic avenues when pursuing opportunities in global markets. (Solberg 2017, chapter 4.4.)



Figure 1. The Nine Strategic Windows (adapted from Solberg 2017)

The external "Industry globality" on the horizontal axis refers to whether the company, in its industry, is operating more on its home markets or globally (Solberg 2017, chapter 4.4). When referring to a high degree of industry globalism, there are multiple interdependencies between customers, markets and suppliers if a few large, strong players are dominating the industry. Local markets that exist independently represent a

multidomestic market environment of industry globalism in the Figure 1. (Hollensen 2011, 18.)

The company's competences and resources are classified in the internal "Preparedness for internationalization", shown on the vertical axis in Figure 1. When developing and implementation strategies, also on lower levels such as for example marketing strategies, the model suggests that the position in the matrix that the company has should be taken into consideration and the organisation should be adapted accordingly. (Solberg 2017, chapter 4.4.)

Hollensen (2011, 18) argues that the well-prepared "adult" company "has a good basis for dominating the international markets and due to that would be able to gain higher market shares. The staying at home option is not discussed widely in the literature, but in a situation where the company does not have a solid position in the home market and also only has very little global experience, it should stay in the home market until it has improved its performance. (Solberg 1997.)

Seeking new owners with extensive international networks refers to a situation where the company is a tiny player in a global industry among big multinational players. This option probably best suits SMEs that are promoting advanced products to firms with an extensive international network. (Hollensen 2011, 19.)

In case of changes in the global demand, SMEs can be financially fragile. Seeking global alliances with companies that show complementary competences, the SME company can mitigate some of its competitive disadvantages if it has already gained some proficiency in global business operations. (Hollensen 2011, 19.)

3.3 Born Global

In Hollensen (2011, 87) Born globals are discussed. A Born global company is defined as "a firm that from its birth globalizes rapidly without any preceding long-term internationalization period". From the establishment, Born globals are aiming for their business to operate in international or even global markets. Relatively often Born globals are SMEs with less than 500 employees and annual sales under 100 million USD. Typically the Born global has an entrepreneurial leader with a vision, who sees the world as one single marketplace on which to operate.

Hollensen (2011, 87) explains that Born globals can be seen as “the challengers” of the traditional internationalization theories. However companies are traditionally seen behaving, the Born globals seem to behave adversely. To become successful in performance, Born globals require remarkable capabilities, skills and resources. (Gabrielsson & Luostarinen 2012.)

According to Gabrielsson and Luostarinen (2012, 2), Born globals are companies who:

1. “Start international operations even before or simultaneously with domestic operations
2. Base their visions and missions mainly on global markets and customers from the inception
3. Plan their products, structures, systems and finance on global basis
4. Grow exceptionally fast on global markets
5. Plan to become global market leaders as a part of their vision
6. Utilize different product, operation and market (POM) strategies as firms have traditionally done
7. Follow different global marketing strategies.”

There are multiple factors that support the emergence of Born globals. In developed economies a factor is the growing demand for specialized and customised products. Due to global markets and competition, smaller companies need to specialize in order to be able to supply products to globally. New, improved technologies are able to help these small companies in their production and processes and also in becoming more competitive. (Hollensen 2011, 89.)

Hollensen (2011, 90) states that SMEs can be defined as responsive, flexible and quick in adaptation when it comes to international and global standards and manners. Global networks are important for Born globals to be able to operate in foreign markets, not only with buyers and sellers, but increasingly with partners such as subcontractors, distributors and trading companies.

One of the most recent and important trends for the Born globals are communications technologies and their opportunities. Communication technologies enable information to flow fast and operations can be managed proficiently. Due to the advancements in

technology, the company can reach more people and places globally, and at the same time. The revolution and globalization of technologies create new ways of operating; for example, SMEs can develop digital platforms for sales. (Hollensen 2011, 90.)

According to Merrilees and Wong (2012, 306, 325-326.) Born globals are becoming increasingly common. They do not always have a higher rate of innovation or superior products to offer compared to traditional companies. However, Born globals seem to have superior performance and they can move fast and forcefully to international markets. To become successful internationally, to grow fast and in an impactful manner, they need to invest a lot of resources. As the Born global companies are often smaller than others, they are able to respond to the market need faster. Speed to market is essential internationally.

3.4 Design-intensive born globals

Macro-level changes in recent decades, such as development of technology, low cost communications and transport, consumer's habits, enable companies to operate internationally, i.e. to become Born globals from their establishment. A design-intensive Born globals is, according to Ainamo, Falay, Gabrielsson and Salimäki (2007, 878-879), "a company with a marketing strategy based on leveraging (artistics, crafts, or product) design as a competitive edge on world markets." (Ainamo et al. 2007, 878-879.)

In their marketing models, Born globals are more flexible and quicker in responsiveness compared to more traditional companies. They also depend on networks and collaboration and are able to outsource some of their weak spots. As a part of the co-operations, they are willing to network and create alliances to manage their own weaknesses and strengths. However, they lack resources and size compared to more traditional competitors. (Ainamo et al. 2007, 879.)

In order for the Born globals to become successful they need to have a global vision and mind-set from the beginning; otherwise rapid growth in global markets is unlikely. It is not enough that the Born globals have technological and product design competence, are innovative and produce quality products. The key for the Born global entrepreneurs are the networks; to "belong to cosmopolitan and transnational social networks of like-minded individuals that enable them to network socially in terms of business and other operations." (Ainamo et al. 2007, 880.)

Ainamo et al. (2007, 881) argue that for design-intensive Born globals the actual design (product) is not the sole key; they also face challenges in consumer's design taste,

legislation and intellectual property rights and the entrepreneurial spirit of the designer. As the taste of consumers varies, it is mandatory for the design-intensive Born globals to maintain visibility of their national culture and emotional power of the products. When taste and fashion transforms, it is challenging for the designer to design and produce products that will endure changes and fit relatively in the global niche.

It is common that the designers lack business knowledge in international marketing and that they are focusing on the designing rather than the commercial side of business. This is often the case in the beginning for the Born globals. (Ainamo et al. 2007, 881.)

The Born globals can face obstacles in clientele and production as they often operate in a small niche globally with small volumes, and exclusivity in distribution and customer base. Consumers are prepared to pay more on a product that is high quality, or it is unique or both. This gives an opportunity to position the designed products as premium products. (Ainamo et al. 2007, 881.)

Ainamo et al. (2007, 890) suggest in their study that they have established three important marketing management areas that designer entrepreneurs should take action on: “they must determine the volume of business (large or small scale), their core design competences (making choices or affecting the choices of others), and their most trustworthy partners to enable effective marketing (fellow designers, venture capitalists, or marketing management specialists).” Their study demonstrates that for the design-intensive Born globals, a rapid growth can very well be a big risk as well as an opportunity. The authors argue that “Born globals need to be able to strike a balance between the partly contradictory priorities of product design and marketing competences.

3.5 Network model

The network model states that the key matters in the internationalisation process of a company is the network relations with its environment. Krzysztof (2012, 32.) The model can be described as a combination of development, establishment and maintenance of network participants' relations in the foreign markets. It highlights the essence of creating long-term interactions in the foreign markets with stakeholders.

		Degree of internationalisation of the market (the product net)	
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
Degree of internationalisation of the firm	<i>Low</i>	The Early Starter	The Late Starter
	<i>High</i>	The Lonely Internationala	The International Among Others

Figure 2. Internationalisation and the network model (adapted from Holm, Forsgren & Johanson 2015, 119)

Holm, Forsgren & Johanson (2015, 119.) argue in their “Internationalisation and the network model” in the Figure 2 that a company’s internationalisation strategy should be aiming for a long-term economic growth. The model tries to explain the three dimensions of internationalisation processes: extension, penetration and integration and its four situations i.e. concerns.

The early starter refers to a company that has less relevant relationships or production networks outside of its domestic market. The important relationships are mainly in the domestic market; hence the company’s knowledge of the foreign market is not significant. (Holm et al. 2015, 120.)

The late starter refers to a company that is operating in the domestic market but has international stakeholders such as for example customers, suppliers and competitors. These relationships can drive the company to operate in the foreign markets. (Holm et al. 2015, 120.)

A company which already has relationships in the foreign markets with other stakeholders is referred to as **The lonely international**. The company has gained knowledge of the foreign market and understands how to manage the different environment. The promotion of the internationalization of the product net in “The lonely international scenario” does not come from outside, but from the company itself. Here the company’s relationships can serve as a net between its customers and suppliers. (Hollensen 2011, 83.)

The international among others is applicable in the situation where both the company and its environment are internationalized. Qualitative changes are not required when the company aims to be even more internationalised, it only requires small adjustments in the penetration and expansion strategy. (Holm & al. 2015, 124.) In the penetration and

extension strategy the international among others company has an opportunity to use “one net bridge over to other net”. (Hollensen 2011, 83).

In the network, the position defines a company’s relations with other stakeholders in the network and also mainly the outcomes from previous interactions. The level of a company’s internationalisation can also be seen as how much it actually occupies some positions in networks abroad and the level of integration of the positions and importance. If the company has multiple strong nets with networks in many foreign countries it is indicative of a high degree internationalisation. (Krzysztof 2012, 30.)

3.6 SWOT

SWOT analysis stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The model is a strategic evaluation tool that companies use when trying to identify their competences and for assessing their strategic position. (Ayub, Iftekhhar, Razzaq & Salman 2013, 92).

The SWOT analysis collects information that can be used as a part of strategic planning. The model gives an opportunity to study external and internal factors that are either helping or preventing the business in their attempts to reach their goals. (Team FME 2013.)

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal Origin	Strenghts	Weaknesses
External Origin	Opportunities	Threaths

Figure 3. SWOT Analysis (adapted from Team FME 2013)

In the SWOT analysis model in the Figure 3 the internal factors include strengths and weaknesses. Resources, capabilities, and situational factors are part of strengths whereas negative situational factors and limitations are seen as weaknesses. External factors include the opportunities that the company can utilise for its benefit and threats that are

considered as unfavourable factors that can put a company's performance at risk. (Kotler, Armstrong & Opresnik 2018. 79-80.)

The SWOT- analysis is not only suitable for creating a business idea but also for the continuous development of a company in different situations. As the idea of the analysis is to create assessments to support plans and decision-making depending on the situation, using the SWOT-analysis it is possible to scrutinise a company's own internal factors at the same time as its external factors. The idea of the SWOT is not only to analyse your company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats but also to act on them and to make relevant decisions. (Jylhä & Viitala 2014, 49-50.)

The analysis model can be valuable and helpful in planning in multiple ways, but the model has its limitations as well: as the model is relatively simple, it creates an opportunity to oversimplify. This is mainly because the model does not include limitations in terms of information as well as of what is relevant and not. (Team FME 2013.)

The SWOT analysis helps companies to in their strategic marketing planning. Its main purpose is to "provide meaningful insights to marketers about organizational key competencies after evaluating data gathered through marketing intelligence and to enable them in making best use of that data in utilizing opportunities, linking those with organization's strengths, identifying major threats, and minimizing weaknesses that SWOT analysis is a valuable and prevalent tool in strategic marketing planning." (Ayub et al. 2013, 93.)

To get a complete overview of the marketing function, a SWOT analysis is preferable according to Kotler, Armstrong & Opresnik (2015). As the marketing plan's objective is to help the business to achieve its strategic goals, also a detailed marketing plan is required for the brand, the products or the businesses. A detailed SWOT analysis is a crucial part of the plan to get an overview of the threats available as well as the current situation in the markets. (Kotler et al. 2018, 80.)

3.7 Competitive analysis

According to Laurell & Parment (2015, 178) "companies that lack competitive power have seen their markets gradually disappear". The global competition and the way in which businesses operate has changed a lot during the last decades. Moreover, markets are very different nowadays compared to what they were before and internationalization has had many complex implications. International markets have made it possible for

companies to operate not only locally but also globally, to make their own purchases globally and to compete with other, big players in the market. In addition, buyers are much more informed of the competition and offering as well as price aware. (Laurell & Parment 2015, 177-178.)

The idea of Porter's five forces model's (Figure 4) is to widen the focus from only studying competitors to including suppliers, customers, substitute products and potential entrants. Porter (2008, chapter 1) explains that the result of combining these five forces will create enhanced competition by setting a structure of the industry and modifying the nature of competitive interaction.

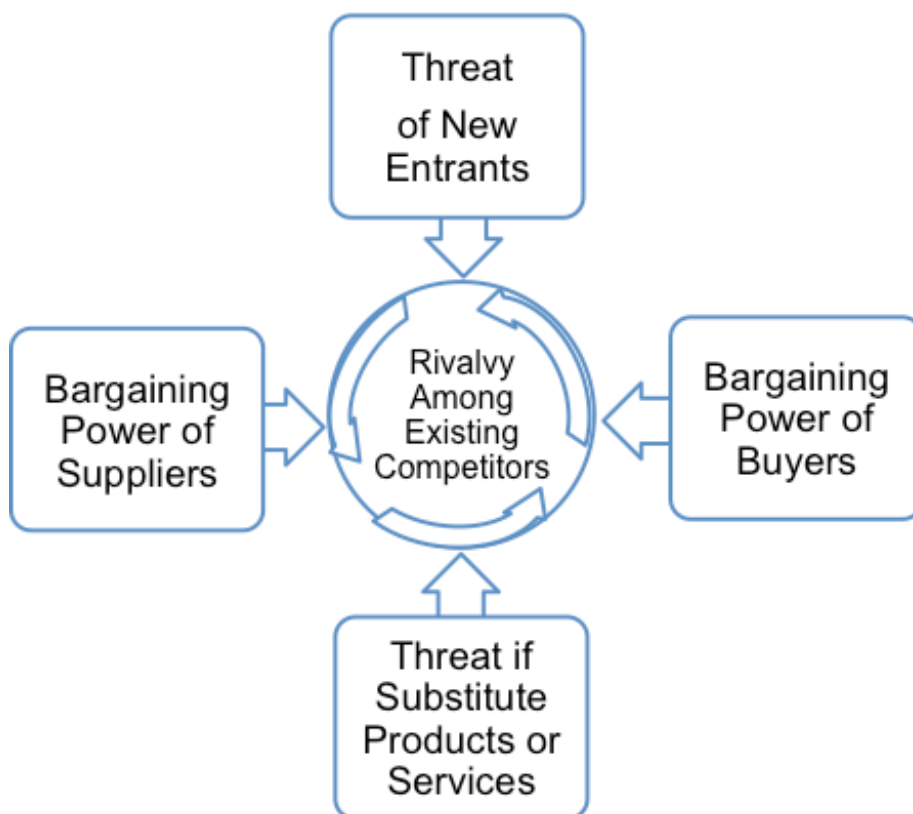


Figure 4. The Five Forces That Shape Industry Competition (adapted from Porter 2008, chapter 1)

According to Hollensen (2011, 109) Porter's Five forces model and the framework it provides on competitive structure is one of the most useful models for analysis of competitors. The five competitive factors together will show the potential in industry profit. Profit is measured as long-run return on invested capital. The model suggests that "competition in an industry is rooted in its underlying economic structure and goes beyond

the behaviour of current competitors”. (Hollensen 2011, 109-110.) Understanding the different structures in the industry is mandatory to efficient strategic positioning. (Porter 2008, chapter 1.)

3.8 Competitor analysis

A powerful marketing strategy demands a complete competitor analysis. In order to explore a company’s advantages and disadvantages compared to its competitors, it is important to research the company’s competitors as much as possible and to be able to compare their products, strategies, processes, promotions and channels. (Kotler et al. 2018, 542.)



Figure 5. Steps in Analysing Competitors (adapted from Kotler et al. 2018, 543)

In Kotler et al. (2018, 543) a simplistic approach to identifying competitors is described: “a company can define its competitors as other companies offering similar products and services to the same customers at similar prices”. However, in reality the range of competitors is much broader and it can entail all competitors in all levels in the industry, not just the ones that are most similar with your company competing for the same profits.

There are multiple ways of **identifying competitors**: for example, from a market or industry point of view. Applying the industry view when identifying competitors, it is important to be industry specific and that the industrial patterns are powerful. Companies that are targeting the same customers and trying to answer their needs are identified as competitors from the market point of view. (Kotler et al. 2018, 543.)

Assessing competitors’ strengths and weaknesses can be complex. The available data on competitors market share, strategies, goals etc. can be very limited; hence it is

necessary to rely on secondary data, word of mouth and personal experience. Other options include benchmarking to explore ways of improving your own business or conduct a marketing research with customers, dealers and suppliers (Kotler et al. 2018, 546.)

When seeking an answer to the question: “What will our competitors do?”, companies need to **estimate competitors’ reactions**. Each competitor is different, not only in their strengths, weaknesses, and strategies or objectives but also in how they react in situations or in their culture and business philosophy. To be able to understand competitors’ next steps it is mandatory to understand their mentality. (Kotler et al. 2018, 546.)

A company can choose whom they are competing against. It is important to understand that everyone needs competitors and benefits from them. Even though choosing to compete only against the more weak competitors can be efficient in terms of resources and time wise, it can be a little short sighted. As when **selecting competitors to attack and avoid**, it is essential to realize which the factors are that the company wants to compete against in their chosen segment in the market. (Kotler et al. 2018, 546-547.)

When aiming for competitive advantage, it is fundamental to explore the differences between the company and the competitors in the market segment as it eventually leads to higher profits and bigger market shares. (Kotler et al. 2018, 547-548.)

3.9 Communications plan

Kotler et al. (2018, 427) explain that the need for integrated marketing communications is enormous as the traditional marketing communications has changed its nature entirely mainly because of the technological development that has created new ways to communicate with your audience, such as social media as well as mobile and online. These new ways of communication provide many opportunities to engage and communicate with the audience, however they also create challenges, especially how to combine these tools in an efficient manner. Kotler et al. (2018, 427) suggests the use of integrated marketing communications as one solution for companies to provide powerful and efficient communications.

Communication means that the message your audience is receiving is proficient enough so that the client reacts positively. Sharing information and facts with the audience creates an effective communication. (Onkvist & Shaw 2004, 414.)

A communications strategy is fundamental in order to communicate with your target audience, as it is not enough to have a best product and price without the interaction. In recent years there has been a significant shift from one-way communication from marketers to customers to two-way communication, where the audience takes part in the conversation and is engaged. (Wood 2013, 171-172.)

3.9.1 Integrated marketing communications

Communications is an important part of a global marketing plan and there are several ways how to communicate with your audience. As a part of international promotion mix **exhibitions, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotions** and **advertising** are considered visible communication tools. According to Hollensen (2011, 586) “all effective marketing communication has four elements: a sender, a message, a communications channel and a receiver referring here to the audience.

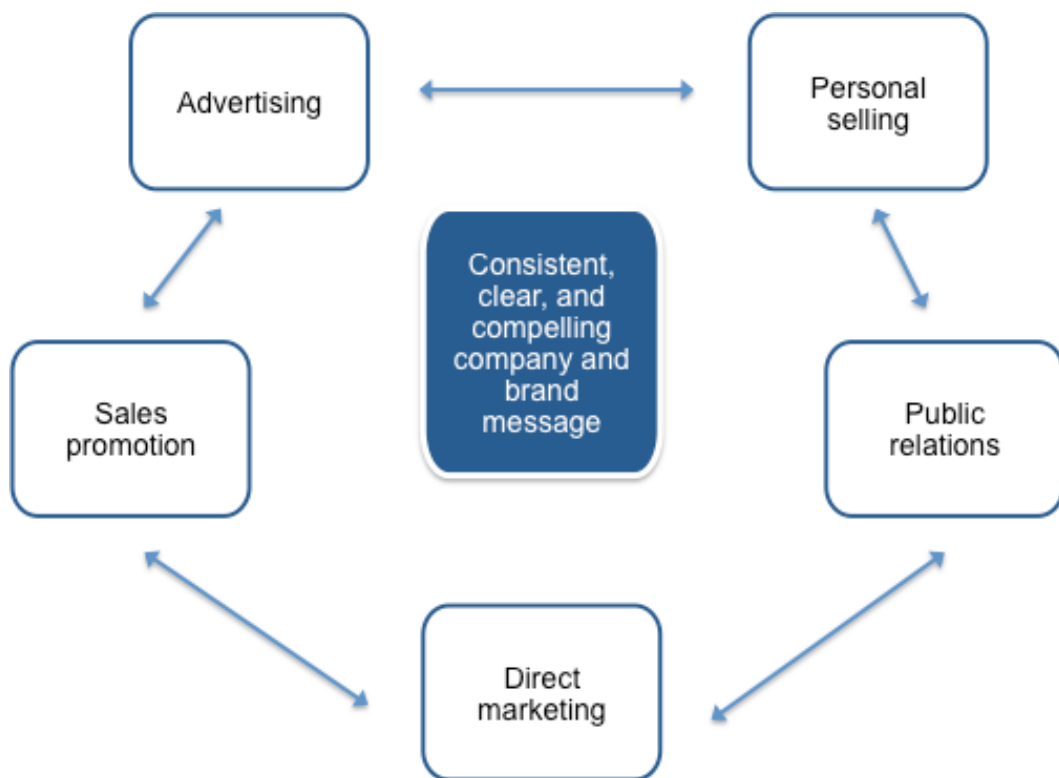


Figure 6. Integrated marketing communications (adapted from Kotler & al. 2018, 429)

The integrated marketing communications strongly suggests that in order to deliver “a clear consistent, and compelling message about the organization and its brands”, integrated communication channels and promotional tools are required. (Laurell & Parment 2015, 204.)

Kotler & al. (2018, 424-425) clarify that the promotion mix is also known as the “marketing communications mix” and all of them include different tools which they use to communicate with their customers.

The tools are as follows:

“Advertising: Any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. Includes broadcast, print, online, mobile, outdoor, and other forms.

Sales promotion: Short-term incentives to encourage the purchase or sale of a product or service. Includes discounts, coupons, displays, demonstrations, and events.

Personal selling: Personal customer interactions by the firm’s sales force for the purpose of engaging customers, making sales, and building customer relationships. Includes sales presentations, trade shows, and incentive programs.

Public relations (PR): Building good relations with the company’s various publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories, and events. Includes press releases, sponsorships, events, and webpages.

Digital and direct marketing: Engaging directly with carefully targeted individual consumers and customer communities to both obtain an immediate response and build lasting customer relationships. Includes direct mail, email, catalogues, online and social media, mobile marketing and more. “

Due to the rise of digital media lately, the integrated marketing communications has become a very popular topic and it has already changed the foundations of traditional marketing communications. (Kotler et al. 2018, 425).

Not only are the professional marketers in organizations promoting the products and services nowadays, but the consumers themselves have become “communications empowered”. This is largely due to the digital transformation, technical development and organizational structures in modern marketplaces. Modern consumers are capable and willing to search information on brands and products, beyond what has been promoted by marketers, by using digital tools. (Laurell & Parment 2015, 204.)

The traditional media landscape has also changed and the rise of digital media is an important part of the media mix today. Consumers have become more connected and integrated with other consumers and brands. Due to the shift in the media landscape, consumers receive messaging from various channels and are not always able to separate the channels and sources in which the messages come through. The increase of communication channels and change in consumers' behaviours implies a permanent change in the media landscape and creates new challenges for marketers, requiring a new way of thinking. (Laurell & Parment 2015, 204-205.)

3.9.2 Social media marketing

Over the past decade, social media has not only changed the way in which companies interact with their client, but they have also invented new ways of viral activities as well as designing very targeted messaging to their audience. Social media itself is changing and developing all the time, which creates new ways of communicating. Houle and Shapiro (2014, 89-90, 94) argue that in the future "people all over the world won't just connect; they will create a level of interaction and meaning of which today's technology offers only a glimpse". Communications continue to be interactive and two-way but transparency will be even more important.

Due to the technological changes, a new engaging, more social and even more targeted marketing communications model has been born. Now it is more important than ever for companies to not only engage customers but to also make customers engage the company. Broad types of "channels of communication" at the moment are "personal" and "non-personal" and the company or communicator needs to choose which one to use. (Kotler et al. 2018, 426, 430, 435.)

Kotler et al. (2018, 435) refer to "nonpersonal" channels when there is a messaging in media that does not require a personal contact or interaction; such as events, major media including print, broadcast, online, mobile and display media, as well as atmospheres. "Personal" communication includes various different channels that require communication between at least two people. These channels include communications face-to-face, via email, mail, chat rooms or on the phone, to name a few.

Integrated marketing communications has changed its nature in the past decades, from the one-way organizational approach to the two-way approach, in which consumers are a part of the communications. Social media marketing plays a significant role in today's integrated marketing communications and consumers perceive it as a more reliable

source of information than the traditional communications by companies in some cases. According to Hollensen (2018, 616-618), social networking has the following interrelated roles as a communications tool:

1. When using social media as a communications tools, regardless of whether the platform is sponsored by external party or by the company itself, it is essential that messaging is consistent with the company's other integrated marketing communication tools.
2. As consumers nowadays have more access to information and can choose their media platforms, companies have less power in controlling the consumer-to-consumer messaging. Social networking can be described as "an extension of traditional word-of-mouth communication" as it allows customers speak to each other.

The success of social media marketing has made it a priority for many companies in their marketing communications. As it has been proven that mentioning brand and products in social media can affect people, it can also affect their friends consuming and purchase habits. (Wood 2013, 172.)

According to Wood (2013, 172) there are four components of social media marketing:

- "Social communities, such as b2b interactions on LinkedIn
- Social publishing, such as brand-relevant video posted on YouTube
- Social commerce, such as coupons offered through Facebook
- Social entertainment, such as product placement in games in Facebook"

It is important to understand that the messaging may not always be received as you are hoping for since you cannot control the social media; there are several ways of using social media marketing. (Wood 2013, 172.)

3.9.3 Word of mouth

There are channels that organizations do not influence but which have a significant role in personal communications channels, such as a "word of mouth". Consumers appreciate other consumers' personal choices and are also interested in online reviews regarding products and services. The impact of personal influence is very valuable, particularly when people are making purchase decisions on expensive products. (Kotler et al. 2018, 435.)

As word of mouth reflects people's feelings, doings and thoughts and as it is not controlled by any company or marketer, it can be considered relatively trustworthy. From a company's point of view it is difficult to manage "word of mouth". Companies can try to spread their messaging but it will not necessarily reach the intended audience and hence it is difficult to control the journey of the messages and whether it is favourable to your company. (Wood 2013, 172.)

According to Enqvist et al. (2019, 10), if the company does not value the importance of marketing and messaging and is also lacking digital marketing knowledge, it may very well hinder the attempts at internationalization. Even though word of mouth or virality in social media can be successful in smaller markets in some cases, in particular with less competition, it will not suffice.

4 Methodology and methods

4.1 Methods of research

The thesis is based on a case study, interviews and application of relevant models. The ontological research philosophy adapted is interpretivism.

According to Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill (2009, 150) ontology is “the researcher’s view of the nature of reality being”. The study has been conducted independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence (realist), but is interpreted through social conditioning (critical realist). (Saunders et al. 2009, 150).

The epistemology of the study is interpretivism as it focuses on “subjective meanings and social phenomena” (Saunders et al. 2009, 119). In the study we have examined the case company and interviews with some detail, taking into account the reality behind them and subjective meanings motivating action.

In the interpretivist approach the data collection consists of small samples, in-depth investigations and a qualitative approach. In realism the methods chosen must fit the subject matter and the approach can be either quantitative or qualitative.

4.1.1 The research approach

The research approach is inductive due to its nature; qualitative analysis and theoretical reviews leading to conclusions. The choice of method is a mono method; qualitative interviews and studies.

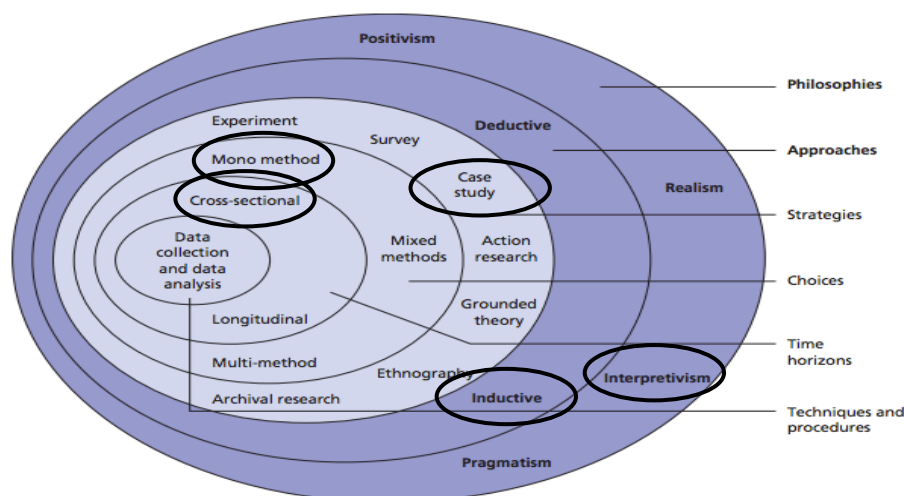


Figure 7. The Research Onion (Saunders et al. 2009, 108)

The study is concerned only with the organisation as a whole; the organisation as a holistic case study. Case study research can include single or multiple cases. Sufficient access to data such as possibility to interview people, review documents or records and to make field observations. (Saunders et al. 2009, 146.)

4.1.2 Case study

As the objective of this study is to suggest an internationalization plan for the Finnish design start-up company Studio Maiju Uski and to find out what kind of marketing and communication plan a start-up should use, the chosen research strategy is a holistic case study.

According to Yin (2003), “the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context within which it is being studied are not clearly evident”, referring to the importance of a context that can be relatively uncontrolled. Depending on the unit of analysis, Yin (2003) distinguishes “holistic” versus “embedded”. The holistic case study when the research object is solely one unit of analyse, whereas if the research focuses on more than one unit of analysis, it is referred to be the embedded case study. (Saunders et al. 2009, 146-147.)

4.2 Data collection methods

Different data collecting methods have been used in the study, such as interviews, articles, studies, and relevant literature. The sources in the study have been used comprehensively to make the most of the theory base of the study. The time horizon of the study is cross-sectional. The data collection method for the study is a qualitative interview.

According to Kahn and Cannell (1957), “an interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people”. Interviews help collecting data that is valid and reliable and are substantial to the study’s objective and research questions. There are many types of interviews, such as structured, semi-structured, and unstructured or in-depth interviews. The interview type should always reflect the purpose of the research and strategy. (Saunders et al. 2009, 318.)

In this study the qualitative interviews are conducted as semi-structured interviews. According to Saunders et al. (2009, 320-321.) typical for the semi-structured interviews is

that context plays a significant role and for example questions as well as the order of the questions can vary between the interviews. Semi-structured interviews however allow additional questions to be asked when exploring the research objective and questions. Considering the nature of the interview questions, the semi-structured interviews are usually audio-recorded or notes have been taken.

The interview questions used in this study were conducted in order to understand what is needed for an internationalization plan for a design start-up and what the designer's own role in it is. The interview questions consist of the main research question and the sub-questions of the study that can be found in the appendix 1.

The interviewees were selected based on their experience in the field of Finnish design and arts. The two interviews in the study were conducted with Laura Sarvilinna and Aura Seikkula in May 2020 via Skype and in person. The interviews were audio-recorded and conducted in Finnish and translated to English in the transcript phase.

Laura Sarvilinna has over 25 years of experience in Finnish design. In the design industry, Sarvilinna is known as the CEO of Huippu Design Management, Artek's Communications Manager and she is also responsible for Iittala's international sales. Through her own company, Huippu Design Management, Sarvilinna has worked with many of the most important Finnish designers and companies utilizing design.

In 2005, when Sarvilinna founded Huippu Design Management, it was the first Finnish company specializing in the representation of designers, such as contract negotiations and international public relations. Currently, Sarvilinna is working as a design consultant and creative director for Habitat 67 fair, where she is responsible for design and interior design-related trade fair events.

Aura Seikkula is an international expert in contemporary art. She has served as a contemporary art curator and advisor, and has lectured and written extensively on art and philosophy internationally. She is currently working as a county artist at the Finnish Center for the Promotion of Art and is completing her dissertation on philosophy and cultural policy on the knowledge-producing nature of contemporary art at the University of Jyväskylä. Seikkula has extensive experience in working with artists internationally.

4.3 Validity and reliability of the study

Validity is concerned with "whether the findings are really about what they appear to be

about.” (Saunders et al. 2009, 157.) The qualitative methods in this study might be exposed to human subjectivity. The questions in the interview were carefully selected to mitigate this risk.

The analysis procedures are qualitative and based on several research articles and well-established models to ensure a reliable study. It is our hope that they will yield consistent findings even when being applied to another Finnish design start-ups.

Easterby-Smith et al. (2008, 109) have established three questions to use for reliability analysis, which we answer here in the context of this thesis:

1. Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions?

In general, Finnish design start-ups are facing similar challenges to the case company. The interviewees are well established, experienced individuals in this area. Therefore it can be argued that many of the findings will apply also to other Finnish design start-ups.

2. Will similar observations be reached by other observers?

The findings in the study are with a high probability time sensitive and there is a feeling in a Finnish design start-up that the current focus for investors is not in design. This is of course a subjective perspective that can change overtime and be highly individual. Over time there may be larger interest in investing in Finnish design start-ups, or in providing better or more extensive support mechanisms for these start-ups. This may also impact the relevance of the findings in this thesis.

3. Is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?

Yes, the raw data was collected through qualitative methods and the contributing individuals are named.

5 Analysis

The aim of the analysis is to gain a deeper understanding of what is required from a Finnish design start-up to be able to create and act on an effective internationalization plan and to succeed internationally. How can such a start-up convince the investors to invest? Two qualitative interviews with subject matter experts were conducted to gain more knowledge on Finnish design, internationalization and the designer's own role in the internationalization process.

The interviewees were chosen based on their extensive experience internationally in the design industry. Laura Sarvilinna has over 20 years of expertise in the Finnish design field, being an artist herself with an educational background, working in various Finnish design companies and being a manager for Finnish designers.

Aura Seikkula has comprehensive experience from various countries in art and design. She has worked as an art advisor and curator for multiple artists internationally. Seikkula is an international expert in contemporary art.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, according to the recent study of Enqvist et al. (2019, 9), the Finnish design companies face various barriers in their internationalization efforts. Through the interviews, the study aims to investigate the research questions presented in the introduction.

5.1 Analysis from the interviews

According to the interviewees, an internationalization plan should be integrated in an overall business strategy and it should be taken into account in the one, three and five years plans. The internationalization plan is automatically a part of the business strategy as companies are operating globally from the establishment.

The internationalization plan should start from the product and skills as well as what the designer does and wants to do and in what the designer is good at. The strategy can be seen as a goal plan and it should contain the designers dreams and goals: to dream about what the designer would like to achieve, at the same time to write their own story, i.e. maybe they knew who they are as a designer, who they want to be, where they want to go. Part of an overall dream. As a part of the plan the designer should also position her or his own identity as a designer; who they are, how they differentiate from others, what their strengths are and in which markets their design has potential.

Based on the interview answers, as a designer, you need to know yourself and have a story, it is very important in the international markets too. Today, in many fields the industry is accustomed to “Excel thinking” block models, but in the design field it is profitable to visualise the strategy. This entails creating such mental images for yourself that you understand the context in which you want to belong as an international designer. Visualizing your own goals is very important and productive.

According to the interviews, there are many types of internationalization and there are many things that need to click in order for a single designer to break internationally. First of all, it is essential to get products into manufacturing. Almost all internationally known Finnish designers are known because of the fact that some known manufacturers have taken their products into manufacture. Working with manufacturers enables the internationalization process to go much faster and more widely as the whole communication and marketing are already in place.

However, when a designer is positioning the start-up with the manufacturers they have to think about how they see themselves and their design. Often, the designer sees him/herself as a true fit for the firm but the firm does not. It's hard for a designer to see how their own products fit into corporate design language, as there are many factors involved. To understand if there is a true fit, it requires the designer to find out about the company and its product portfolio. The better knowledge the designer has of the company, its history and the manufacturing techniques they use, the better the chance is to get the products to production. It is very important that the designer understands the manufacturing process and what it requires.

The interviewees highlighted, that in order to get the design into the portfolios of international companies, it is worth doing some research about the companies. In addition the designer should consider how their own design language suits the product portfolio of the companies. The designer can manage their own communication and fostering co-operations and networks as well as their own exhibition projects. Marketing research on the targeted companies would be also desirable.

Findings from the interviews stated that the relationship with media can not be underestimated as the journalists still have great power in the industry. When things go naturally and well with the media, it is possible that they can be benevolent promoters for the designer. It matters a lot. As a designer, it is important to have a view on the entire media network, to think about which markets have the most important medias and to be a strategically high-quality and regular communicator towards them.

The interviewees explained that the start-up needs to scan competitors and similar players and then make a mapping of what it is comparable to. Other important step is to find new role models, to believe in your own talent and to try to stand out from the competition by finding a differentiating angle.

The findings in the interviews indicate that there are a lot of existing network structures internationally, which a designer can activate especially in specific markets. For example, cultural institutes that can help the entrepreneurs with market knowledge, creation of business or an internationalization plan focused on a specific country. Also embassies and consulates are able to help and support and they have a lot of contacts in the industry field. There may be commercial specialists focused on start-ups and their internationalization, as this is often the role of delegations in international relations. These structures can be utilized in the plan.

The interviewees emphasized that media relationships are a crucial part of the international networks and that the designer needs to be responsible of their own PR. The designer needs to build a network especially with the museum institutes, media and manufacturers. Involvement in designer-driven projects and collaborations should also be considered. These collaborations receive media attention. It is also important to actively seek and maintain the relationships by communicating on the design work. The importance of the media is still significant and companies follow the media and some specific journalists. It would be ideal for a journalist from abroad to get to know and “fall in love” with the designer. This is one reason why trade fairs and other social events are essential: to create a relationship with journalists through meetings with them and introducing new work. The younger generation follows influencers in social media.

What is essential for “platform thinking” is not just what the products look like but how you come across as a designer. Not aiming for any personality cult being built, but rather being aware of the products being profiled through the designer themselves. Trade fair activities are absolutely essential. It is not enough to go to a fair and man a booth: the planning for the fair needs to start a year or two before the fair takes place. A designer also needs to create and maintain a contact register of contacts and to communicate to them separately, for example in a form of newsletters or Instagram. Social situations around the trade fairs can sometimes be the most lucrative, such as dinner parties or drinks that require perseverance but are a necessity.

The interviewees indicate that international relationships are promotional work and they cannot always be planned in advance, but they depend largely on the designer. Networks and relationships should not be underestimated. Even if creating relationships is

challenging for the designer, it is necessary in order to pursue an international career. In Finland there are many examples of internationally successful designers who are introverts.

In the experience of the interviewees, It is important to do proper due diligence and benchmarking on the networks and companies but it is at least as important to believe in yourself and to try to be where things are happening. Sometimes it's up to the little things when something big shows up.

Another finding is that the internationalization plan needs to be very targeted and something that the designer is actively living with. In other words, the strategy should always move the goals forward but also acknowledge that the plan and goals can be modified and adapted along the way. The strategy includes, in addition to the future vision, communication externally and internally. Regardless of the size of the company, there must be an understanding, also visually, of what is being done and why. This in order to ensure that the message is clear in all directions.

Often it requires a lot work to create an internationalization plan but the layout of the plan or the length or nonessential, as long as it reflects the designer. Essential is that it is crystal clear in the plan what the goal is and how it is to be achieved. Generally, the shorter and more concise, the clearer and bolder, the better. In the making of the plan, it is absolutely important to listen to as many different perspectives as possible.

A strategy must be a strategy that the designer benefits from and its look and feel should reflect the designer. When the designer is creating it, it is then easy to follow and understand it too.

Concretely, a designer can benefit from a strategy especially when in the middle of a creative process; often what can happen is that the designer loses their own thoughts and creativity. However, no one can constantly be inspiring and creative and live in an awesome state of endless success. This is when the strategy helps the designer, especially when it is visualized and explains reminds them of who they are and where they are going. In a positive scenario, it can even be a resource for themselves, especially when it gets finances tighten.

Both interviewees stated that knowing yourself, as a designer is the "key" to everything. It is a resource when building self-knowledge, self-confidence and understanding of who they are as a designer and what the aesthetic preferences are, childhood role models and so on. These things matter and they act as a precursor to the strategy itself, it is just about what kind of person the designer is.

Also, when promoting the business, a clear self-understanding will enable the ability to briefly and concisely start a conversation by telling who the designer is and what they are aiming for with the products they have designed. At the same time they have to be profound. The requirement of a successful strategic planning is background work and creating resources to understand the context in which it works, what others do, what has been done in the past, in what kind of tradition the designer places themselves in, etc. Also a general education in the design field is really important.

According to the interviewees, there are certain communicative and event laws to which the designer is forced to adhere, forced to play by the rules of the game as they prevail today. The designer or an artist can no longer get lost in mysticism, it unfortunately does not work that way internationally. However, this does not mean, that you should be in the spotlight all the time. You can be open about it and say you don't necessarily like it, but you still need to be informative and reachable.

The value of relationships and their maintenance is very high according to the interviews. It's extremely important for a designer to do their own thing with their own heart and their own way. It is easy to see if they are just doing it for money. The values are different in different countries and cultures and it is the same for which professional group it is, Finns think that the work you do must come from your heart and you need to believe in what you do. It is emphasized a lot in the education in this professional group in Finland. As a contrast, in the USA a very large part of education is business acumen and commercial understanding and how to make a lot for the mass. It is an integral part of their culture. In Finland, this is absent in education in primary school. Currently it all starts with self-education instead of being part of the basic education. It would be beneficial if guidance counsellors also included educational guidance on the financial side and understanding of the business. It is much more challenging if these aspects are introduced at a later stage, when studying for a profession.

The interviewees explained that there is always added value in strategic cooperation. The critical questions are with whom to cooperate and why. In order for there to be added value, there must also be synergies, in other words, something that the designer feels that they as an entrepreneur get from the partner but at the same time they give something back. Collaboration is always inspiring and gives the designer new ideas, and creates networks even internationally if they collaborate with an international producer or designer. Networks have all the value.

The same two-sided rules apply for production or managerial collaboration. It is not enough that the production, brand or manager is well known; they need to be able to

promise the designer something tangible. Also the designer should feel that it is really getting something out from the collaboration that will take the business forward, also the designer needs to have the courage and credit to show, that as a young designer or start-up they will also add value to the collaboration.

That a designer is seen in other contexts also creates value in the design industry. This entails knowing what the strategy is and how it is visualized, what other elements the designer has, for example a little more experimental connections that support the understanding of the designer's design process and an aesthetic understanding, or the design's functionality, sociality or visualization.

According to the interviews, the use of a communication plan, which entails internal and external communication and effective communication, is really important for a start-up in its internationalization plan. The use of the plan is maybe even more difficult today than before, mainly because of the rising attention to social media, which is impressive in the design field and because of the fact that it is really challenging to get media visibility. Due to these reasons the start-ups own social media presence and digital communication plays an extremely important role. It is challenging to get media visibility, however the media is interested in stories. If you have the story as a designer, what you are doing and why and what makes you unique. Certain uniqueness always interests media.

Maintaining relationships with the network is very important, not everyone is on Instagram. The designer needs to be very proactive, immediately within a day after an appointment at a fair or another occasion, the designer needs to send a thank you email and four to five times a year must send out a general newsletter-type email, not too generic though, from which they can show their own work and progress and to connect and suggest future appointments.

According to the interviewees, it is definitely worth applying for funding as soon as you have created a strategy and roadmap for your business. One option to think about is a business loan. The loan is a good option when the start-up is ready to invest properly, however, perhaps not right at the beginning. There are many other funding channels, but a start-up cannot depend on grants. The idea is to receive funding in order to support the designer's career progression so that the designer is able to live on the design without outside funding.

In Finland, you still have the option to apply for artist / designer grants, everything else comes through Business Finland. However, the challenge is that design is seen as either a cultural act or a business. Either you get money for business or for culture. You typically

do not get grants as a commercial design business. They want to differentiate the two things; if you are an artist then you can't do business. If you are a businessperson, you do business, not culture. A crucial distinction for a design start-up is that it does both. In Finland, it is common to divide these things.

The state does not see that supporting design is profitable and that these cultural act and their funding can carry on for many years to come. There have been no investments from the state in Finland since the Milan Triennale in the 1970s. Sweden, for example, currently finances select designers for five to seven years and the receivers of the funding are forced to go abroad every year to do big things for which funding is available. In Finland such long-term funding programs do not exist for designers. The future depends on whether the views of decision-makers will change in these matters in the future. Many decades have passed now under the leadership of certain types of politicians and we will see if this environment will change in the future.

The female power and age distribution of the current government in Finland is already a step forward, but how far it will drive change is unclear, as it requires a very different mind-set from political decision-makers than that which Finland has had in the past. It may be that Finland and the decision-makers are waking up to the fact that there is no longer any industry in Finland that keeps the country afloat and that there is a need to invest in completely different things.

5.2 Analysis of the findings

The interview findings will now be analyzed. This is based on the following questions / hypotheses: What is required from a Finnish design start-up to be able to create and act on an effective internationalization plan and succeed internationally? And how to convince the investors to invest in a Finnish design start-up?

As a basis of the analysis, it is important to understand the current state of the Finnish design and its challenges in the internationalization process.

Enqvist et al. (2019, 9) argue, that there are multiple obstacles for Finnish design companies in their attempts seeking international success. First of all there are not that many channels to support the efforts and also references from other recent success stories that are currently missing. However, the biggest obstacle in Finland is considered to be the lack of imperative international networks and funding of smart capital that would

support the internationalization attempts by promoting and selling the services or products outside of Finland.

5.2.1 Internationalization plan

According to the findings, the importance of an internationalization plan including a marketing and communications plan shouldn't be underestimated. The plan defines the company's objectives and vision and guides the company in its endeavours. A plan that has been done properly and thoughtfully serves as a base for the company's functions. Also, in situations where things change suddenly or the designer feels insecure, the plan can be seen as a reminder of the goals and vision that keeps them on track. However, the plan should be done in such a way that it can be modified along the way and that it grows with the designer and the business.

The format of the plan should reflect the designer. The role of the designer in the planning cannot be enough emphasized. The base for the plan is to "know yourself". The entirety of the plan should mirror the designer's ideas, thoughts, goals, dreams and vision. It should reflect visually who the designer is and their goals, ambitions and dreams. However, the most essential reason for implementing the study is that it is clear, lively, as well as it needs to be effective and the designer should get a tangible benefit from it.

The ideal plan would include scenarios for one, three and five years and it should include vast research, including market and competitor analysis, as well as knowledge of the design environment and manufacturers. Research of the manufacturers and companies is necessary, as it is imperative for the design start up to be successful to get its products into manufacturing.

In the design field, internationalization can be seen as a part of the DNA of start-ups as they operate globally from the start. A large part of the planning should take into account the market where the company sees itself operating. Due to the international nature of the business and the rise of technology and the shift in market environment, design start-ups often define themselves as Born globals, i.e. global companies from the establishment. As in today's world, the business doesn't necessarily need physical stores when the business is happening online or through 3rd party sellers.

However, it is a challenge to be able to differentiate from the competitors. For this reason it is essential to specialize in order to be able to compete in the global markets. As high quality, innovative products are valued among consumers in niche markets and there is

willingness to pay more on those products, there is an opportunity for the designer to design high quality products. Being a global company from the start gives an advantage in market responsiveness. Often smaller companies that are used to operating globally are quick to respond to changing situations, which is also a key when operating internationally.

5.2.2 Networks

Design start-ups that are Born global are very much dependent on relationships and networks. The importance of networks should not be underestimated as the whole internationalization process is based on creating, building and developing networks and relationships. If a company has operated internationally from the start, it already has networks and knowledge of the markets when growing its international business. When the international networks are strong, the level of potential for internationalization is high.

Strategic collaboration with other designers, managers or production can be very beneficial for both parties, however a proper background work on the networks needs to be done in advance. Added value and synergies are created through these networks and collaborations that will benefit all parties.

5.2.3 SWOT analysis

It is also important to analyse the company's readiness for internationalization and in what markets to operate. Equally important is to define the goals and preparedness in the global market. To be able to analyse the preparedness, it is important to analyse the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
High quality design and products	Inexperience in entrepreneurship
Designer's comprehensive education in the field of design; Polytechnic degree in furniture and interior design and master's degree in furniture and product design from a prestigious university and international studies	Lack of financial knowledge
Designer's working experience in the field; training support contractors and employed in a prestigious design office for domestic and foreign projects	Promote your own skills
Internationality and language skills	Lack of networks
Contacts with designers, design offices, advisors and manufacturers in Finland and abroad	
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Interesting projects and their livelihood -Creating an international career	Competition and differentiation between providers of similar types of services
Evaluation of Finnish design - a market area all over the world	Economic situation globally; customer caution in investing
The potential of modern technology as a driver of growth	

Figure 8. SWOT analysis Studio Maiju Uski

The key strengths of the case company are its products. They are high quality, functional and sustainable. The strength of the company also rests on the good reputation of Finnish design. The feedback Studio Maiju Uski has received so far has been extremely positive, including in particular a lot of potential in the designer's work. The designer's comprehensive education in respected universities can be seen as a strength. Also her extensive work experience and the gained knowledge from the industry by attending several industry fairs internationally can be seen as valuable strengths. The designer has also created network domestically and internationally among other designers, advisors and manufacturers.

The main weaknesses of the company are most of all lack of entrepreneurship, sales and marketing skills and financial knowledge. The designer is primarily focusing on the design process in itself and does not have previous education or experience in marketing and communications practices or processes. Another weakness is the lack of relevant contacts and networks domestically and globally, even if the company has already created a network base. Also, a lack of knowledge of how to promote themselves and the business to the network can be seen as a weakness.

Even though the future of Finnish design sector has high potential, new companies struggle with several challenges when they are trying to become international. Despite of the current economic situation in Finland and now the global Covid-19 crisis, there are still some public and private players in the field that are keen to support start-ups and also finance them in their internationalization attempts.

The opportunities for the case company are based on the increasing interest towards new young designers across the world and the increasing co-operation among designers in the global markets. Finnish design has a good reputation both in domestic and global markets and today the power of social media opens plenty of opportunities for marketing for the designer companies.

There are a lot of challenges and threats for the case company. Not only is the Finnish market small but the Finnish design export industry is also small. The slow economic growth and the financial crisis back in 2008 have affected the design industry in the past decade. The market started to pick up within the past few years but at the moment we can only guess how long term implications the current Covid-19 situation will have in the industry and the world in general. It can also be difficult to compete with other competitors' in Finland and globally with similar products and collections. It can be seen as a threat or a challenge to find the differentiating angle from the competitors.

5.2.4 Competitor analysis

Not only do the networks need to be analysed in advance, but also an analysis of the competitors is preferred in order to compare the strengths and weaknesses and assess the strategies and objectives of the competitors. Based on the analysis it is possible to select the main competitors and what strategy to use to tackle them.

The main Finnish competitors for the case company are chosen due to their similar work in the Finnish design industry; they all design sustainable high-quality products and furniture. All the competitors have a similar background and education, they all share similar values and aesthetics, and all prefer similar material choices and sustainability in their work as the case company. They can be described as the main competitors in Finland as well as outside of Finland as they have succeeded internationally.

The four main competitors are presented below:

Susan Elo is a designer focusing on object design and interior design for private homes and public spaces. In addition, she teaches furniture design at Aalto University. Products she has designed are included in Cappellini's collection. She has also made luminaires and furniture produced in small series in collaboration with other designers and artisans. Elo has an extensive experience in the field and her work is recognized in the design industry. She also has a wide contact networks brought in by producers and authors over the years.

Joanna Laajisto is an interior architect focusing on interior design for public spaces and also does some interior design for private homes as well as product design. She has been responsible for the interior design of many restaurants, shops and small offices as well as producing a lamp of her own design. In addition, she has collaborated e.g. with the Finnish furniture manufacturer Lundia. Laajisto has a strong brand and wide contact network. Her work is visible in the press.

Studio Kaksikko is a company designing and producing wooden furniture and ceramic tableware, with a focus on tactile qualities of high-quality materials. The founders of the Studio Kaksikko, Salla Luhtasela and Wesley Walters, both have degrees from Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture, due to the education they understand the manufacturing process very well. Studio Kaksikko has collaborated on a broad range of professional projects

Antrei Hartikainen is a designer and cabinetmaker and is very well known for his exquisite works in wood despite of his young age. His work includes functional products and pure art works highlighting the Nordic atmosphere. Hartikainen's work is valued also because of his expertise in craftsmanship. Hartikainen has received a lot of media visibility and his work has been present in various solo and group exhibitions globally. Hartikainen was awarded with prize as a young designer of the year 2018 in Finland and shortlisted as emerging designer of the year 2019 by Dezeen awards.

These above designers represent a brief analysis of the main competitors in Finland and internationally that are competing against the case company. These four competitors Susan Elo, Joanna Laajisto, Studio Kaksikko, and Antrei Hartikainen represent the strongest competitors for the case company.

Susan Elo can be seen as strong competitor as well due to her small object design and manufacturing process. Her design style is very Nordic contemporary and focus of the products is in the quality and sustainability. Her contact networks are diverse due to her extensive and versatile career. A lack of experience in large space design projects can be seen as a competitive weakness.

Joanna Laajisto is a very strong competitor and she is widely known through her work, especially in interior design. She designs functional products that are crafted from the end-user's point of view. She has collaborated with numerous well-known companies and her work has been published widely not only in Finland but also internationally. A lack of experience in furniture design can be seen as a competitive weakness.

Studio Kaksikko represents a strong competitor as the designer's backgrounds are diverse; Wesley Walters is a carpenter and Salla Luhtasela a ceramist and together they make a very strong duo. Wesley Walters is American and has lived in Japan. He has extensive language skills and knowledge of the Asian market. The company has gained international success as well as their products can be found in the selection of Finnish and international companies, such as Muuto, Nikari and Matri. A lack of architectural perception can be described as the competitive weakness of the Studio Kaksikko.

Antrei Hartikainen can be described as a strong competitor due to his knowledge in craftsmanship and design that emphasizes the Nordic culture. His product design language is very close to the case company's'. Due to recent awards and nominations, Hartikainen has received a great amount of media visibility in recent years. This competitor's weaknesses are mainly in lack of product and furniture design for public spaces.

5.2.5 Marketing and communications plan

The value of communications cannot and should not be underestimated. The development of the communications technology in the past decades has made the communication between parties more interactive and engaging. It is easier to have two-sided conversations with the audience and gain insights.

The development of the technology can also create challenges. Even though it is difficult to get media visibility, social media provides a platform for the start-up to communicate with its audience globally, anytime and anywhere, fast.

The communications plan is an essential part of a start-ups internationalization plan and should be integrated as a part of the start-ups DNA. In the marketing communications, the company should always be true to itself, have trust in itself and it's own doing. You need to believe in what you do.

Trade fair and exhibition participation is imperative for a design start-up. As mentioned earlier, the value of networks can be measured and the fairs provide a platform to meet industry piers, create networks and build relationships. Also attending the social side programs around the fair is necessary. These platforms are an excellent example of how "word of mouth" works as communications channel and hence should not be underestimated.

Maintaining these contacts and relationships is the key in the communications plan. The designer needs to communicate with the target audience consistently, i.e. the people with whom the designer has interacted in person should receive clear communication on the design, projects, and plans as well productions. Through the maintenance of the relationships, the designer can connect more on a personal level with the audience. It is also important to communicate with the wider audience for example on social media and to communicate more broadly on the above topics.

Getting media attention can be seen as challenging and difficult, however media is always interested in stories. Even though a trade fair participation can be one platform to get media's attention, there are several other possibilities. A designer should always have a story that attracts attention and makes them unique compared to others.

Collaborations and more experimental exhibitions or projects also tend to get more attention from media. These collaborations support the designers own design language and create an understanding of the design process and what the design is about. The designer being visible in other contexts than the traditional ones creates interest and value in the media. The value of media in the internationalization process is still remarkable. With a proper, thorough planning and effective execution, the relationship with the media can be very prosperous.

5.2.6 Funding

Finnish design start-ups face many challenges in their internationalization attempts. One of the biggest challenges is lack of funding. Small design companies are seen as risky investments and more of cultural acts than profitable businesses. In Finland, the tech start-ups that have been able to raise funding to a larger extent than design start-ups. For the investors it appears to be easier and less risky to invest in something tangible.

The lack of funding from the state has its roots already in the 1970s. There are several excellent examples of design success stories from other Nordic countries, where the state or government is supporting and funding the design start-up companies. At the moment, a Finnish design start-up still has few options to seek funding; applying for grants, support from Business Finland based on expenses and for a loan.

6 Conclusions

The objective of the study was to suggest an internationalization plan for a Finnish design start-up company. The aim was also to find out what kind of marketing and communication channel strategies Finnish design start-ups can use and why. We have examined how critical the designer's own role is in the internalization plan, including marketing and communication strategy. Finnish design industry in general and its current status and challenges were also introduced and analysed.

The outcomes of the study indicate that the role of the designer in the internationalization process is imperative. Investing time and effort in creating a robust network multiple stakeholders. A holistic understanding of the industry and its challenges is crucial for design start-up to succeed internationally.

6.1 Suggestions & recommendations

This study has deduced several recommendations for the future development based on the findings from the interviews and analysis. The recommendations include actions that suggest that the case company focus on the following actions as they would be beneficial in the internationalization process.

The importance of knowing yourself, as a person and designer cannot be highlighted enough. In the initial phase focus on letting the products reflect who you are and your own preferences and culture. It is suggested to create a visual internationalization plan that includes a detailed marketing and communications plan. In parallel consider positioning yourself more broadly, not just through your products and design but show another side of you as an artist by organizing or attending in exhibition or art collaboration.

It is also suggested to deepen the knowledge of the design industry; companies, manufacturers, finance and investors. The industry knowledge and understanding of product manufacturing is crucial when collaborating with different stakeholders.

Once the above mentioned steps have been implemented, a recommended next step would be a proper, comprehensive planning of the company's marketing and communications. The plan should include a detailed plan on how to maintain and develop the company's network and connections; create a database for contacts, actively contact the connections by sending out meeting requests, and newsletters. Use social media as a

platform to interact and engage with your audience. It is suggested to seek for a media attention through more experimental ways of expressing your design and art.

Studio Maiju Uski was approved to exhibit in Milan at Salone del Mobile in April 2020, however as a consequence of the Covid-19, the internationally most important furniture fair in the world was postponed to 2021. When the above mentioned suggestions have been effectuated, the suggestion for Studio Maiju Uski is to apply for funding to develop the company in its internationalization endeavours. The funding can be applied for from Ely-keskus, Business Finland, or the new Dealflow Finland –online service. The recommendation for the company is to use the current volatile market situation as an opportunity to develop the internationalization plan more in detail, and to take the time to design new products and execute the plan at the Salone del Mobile in 2021.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

One possible direction for future research is continued longitudinal study of the case company. Are the findings in this study easy to apply in reality and are there other perspectives to take into account such as manufacturing, logistics and novel types of collaborations.

Another direction is to include multiple design start-ups as case studies to increase the data collection and deepen the analysis.

The third possible direction is to compare the Finnish design start-up environment in other countries. Is it more beneficial to be a design start-up in another country than Finland? And are there factors that differ, that can be easily identified?

6.3 Own learning

The idea of the study was born already in 2015 when my now sister-in-law founded her company, Studio Maiju Uski. Personally I am a huge design lover, especially in Finnish and international contemporary design and as a co-owner of the company, I have my own personal interest in the development of the company internationally.

I found it very interesting to study and learn more about the Finnish design industry, its history and current situation. Learning more about the start-up scene and how the Finnish design can be promoted internationally was intriguing. I also found it fascinating to be a

part a of a new success story and promote high quality and sustainable Finnish design. Having participated in various seminars and fairs in Helsinki, Stockholm and New York during the past four years, I have learned a lot from the design industry, how it operates and what are the key factors for the design start-up to succeed internationally.

One of the first seminars in Helsinki back in 2017 had a topic “what is designers own role in a start-up company?” I still think the seminar was an excellent starting point for the thesis project, that took longer than originally planned, and gave me a lot to think about not just from the business perspective but also from the designer’s perspective.

Attending multiple fairs and industry events especially was productive, educative and informative. I had the opportunity to meet plenty of designers, design managers and producers who gave valuable insights for the study.

Due to Covid-19 situation and limited access to libraries it that has created some challenges in the writing process, as many of the originally planned materials were not available online. However, I have used alternative materials, hence the versatile use of electronic materials such as articles, studies and e-books.

I am grateful that the interviewees were able to participate in the interviews despite of the current world situation, however, not all the originally planned interviews were not conducted.

I strongly believe that this study provides practical advises and actions for the case company Studio Maiju Uski. The company and the designer are given an honest internationalization plan including marketing and communication plan for its own use.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

The main research problem/question of the study is:

- What kind of internationalization plan does a design start-up need?

The sub-questions are:

- How to create an internationalization plan for a design start-up?
- What existing international structures / networks can be utilized in the plan?
- How can a designer benefit from the plan?
- What is the designer's own role in the creation of the internationalization, marketing and communication plans?
- Can value be added by collaborating / connecting / working together with external partners?
- How to fund the use of external partners?